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ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

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DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE PERSONNEL ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2004

S. 2484, AS AMENDED

TITLE: To amend title 38, United States Code, to simplify and improve pay provisions for physicians and dentists and to authorize alternate work schedules and executive pay for nurses, and for other purposes.

S. 2484, as amended, would:

1. Establish a reformed compensation system for physicians and dentists appointed in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The compensation system would require VA to determine the rate of pay for a physician or dentist on the basis of three elements as follows: (1) a 15-step Physician and Dentist Base and Longevity Pay Schedule established in law; (2) a market pay band for clinical specialties and subspecialties set by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and (3) an incentive bonus not to exceed the lower of \$15,000 or 7.5 percent of the combined base and market pay of a physician or dentist who meets established performance goals set by the Department.
2. Require the Under Secretary for Health to be compensated at the annual rate of base pay for positions at Level III of the Executive Schedule, and permit the Under Secretary who is also a physician or dentist to be paid the market pay element of the reformed compensation system.
3. Require the Secretary to submit a series of reports to Congress on the effectiveness of the reformed compensation system and include an assessment of its impact on recruitment and retention.
4. Establish the effective date of the reformed compensation system to be the first day of the first pay period that begins on or after January 1, 2006.
5. Provide a transition pay authority for physicians and dentists appointed before the effective date of the revised compensation system and guarantee that current physician pay rates would be held harmless.
6. Authorize VA to offer two additional options for alternative tours of duty for nurses working in VA health care facilities as follows: (1) three 12-hour tours of duty in a week would be paid as 40 hours; and (2) nine months of work with three months off in a year that would be paid over a 12-month period.
7. Authorize VA to provide nurse executives employed in VA health care facilities and VA's Central Office special pay allowances of not less than \$10,000 or more than \$25,000.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Date of enactment except the following section:

Sec. 3: Shall apply on the first day of the first pay period that begins on or after January 1, 2006.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

June 1, 2004: Referred to the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

June 22, 2004: Hearing. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.
July 20, 2004: Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs ordered reported favorably with amendments.
Sep. 23, 2004: Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs reported with an amendment in the nature of a substitute and an amendment to the title, with written report number 108-357.
Oct. 5, 2004: Passed the Senate with an amendment and an amendment to the Title by unanimous consent.
Oct. 6, 2004: Received in the House.
Oct. 6, 2004: Message on Senate action sent to the House.
Oct. 6, 2004: Held at the desk.